United Nations E/CN.15/2001/6

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
4 April 2001

Original: English

Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice
Tenth session
Vienna, 8-17 May 2001
Item 5 of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Tenth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders

Review of the role, function, periodicity, duration and rules of procedure of the United Nations congresses on the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders

Note by the Secretariat

I. Background

1. In the statement of principles and programme of action of the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme, annexed to its resolution 46/152 of 18 December 1991, entitled "Creation of an effective United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme", the General Assembly indicated that the United Nations congresses on the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders, as a consultative body of the programme, should provide a forum for:

(a) The exchange of views between States, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and individual experts representing various professions and disciplines;

(b) The exchange of experiences in research, law and policy development;

(c) The identification of emerging trends and issues in crime prevention and criminal justice;

(d) The provision of advice and comments to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice on selected matters submitted to it by the Commission;

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(e) The submission of suggestions, for the consideration of the Commission, regarding possible subjects for the programme of work.

2. In the statement of principles, the General Assembly called for the implementation of the following arrangements for the United Nations congresses:

(a) The congresses should be held every five years, for a period of between 5 and 10 working days;

(b) The Commission should select precisely defined topics for the congresses in order to ensure a focused and productive discussion;

(c) Quinquennial regional meetings should be held under the guidance of the Commission on issues related to the agenda of the Commission or of the congresses, or on any other matters, except when a region did not consider it necessary to hold such a meeting. The United Nations institutes for the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders should be fully involved, as appropriate, in the organization of those meetings. The Commission should give due consideration to the need to finance such meetings, in particular in developing regions, through the regular budget of the United Nations;

(d) Action-oriented research workshops on topics selected by the Commission, as part of the programme of a congress, and ancillary meetings associated with the congresses should be encouraged.

II. Follow-up to the Tenth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders: draft Plan of Action for the Implementation during the period 2001-2005 of the Vienna Declaration

3. In its resolution 54/125 of 17 December 1999, the General Assembly requested the Tenth Congress to submit, through the Commission and the Economic and Social Council, its declaration to the Millennium Assembly for consideration and action, and requested the Commission to give priority attention at its ninth session to the conclusions and recommendations of the Tenth Congress, with a view to recommending, through the Council, appropriate follow-up by the Assembly at its fifty-fifth session.

4. In its resolution 55/59 of 4 December 2000, the General Assembly endorsed the Vienna Declaration on Crime and Justice: Meeting the Challenges of the Twenty-first Century, adopted by the Tenth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders.

5. In its resolution 55/60 of 4 December 2000, the General Assembly requested the Commission to continue at its tenth session its consideration of the findings and recommendations embodied in the Vienna Declaration and, as appropriate, the report of the Tenth Congress,[1] and to take appropriate action; and requested the Secretary-General to prepare, in consultation with Member States, draft plans of action to include specific measures for the implementation of and follow-up to the commitments undertaken in the Declaration for consideration and action by the Commission at its tenth session.

6. In compliance with that request, the Commission has before it a report of the Secretary-General containing draft Plans of Action for the Implementation during the period 2001-2005 of the Vienna Declaration which incorporates the contributions of Governments following consultations during the inter-sessional meetings of the Commission (E/CN.15/2001/5).

III. Rules of procedure for the United Nations congresses

7. The attention of the Commission is drawn to rule 63 of the provisional rules of procedure for United Nations congresses on the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders, which states: "After the completion of each Congress, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice shall make appropriate recommendations to the Economic and Social Council for such amendments to the present rules as it may deem necessary." The Commission may wish to recommend such amendments in the light of its consideration of the organization of the eleventh congress, as appropriate.

IV. Review of the role, function, periodicity and duration of the United Nations congresses

8. In its resolution 53/110 of 9 December 1998, entitled "Preparations for the Tenth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders", the General Assembly decided that the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, at its tenth session, should undertake a review of the role, function, periodicity and duration of the United Nations congresses on the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders, including the issue of regional preparatory meetings.

9. At its ninth session, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice considered, under agenda item 5, the recommendations of the Tenth Congress. The following excerpts of the report of the Commission[2] reflect the views expressed on the Tenth Congress:

> "18. ... While recognizing the importance and relevance of the United Nations congresses on the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders, participants noted the need to review their organization, structure and agenda, in particular their periodicity, substantive and thematic focus, format and title, with a view to providing greater opportunity for in-depth discussion on selected themes of interest in order to achieve better results at future congresses. It was recalled that, at its forthcoming tenth session, the Commission should have a comprehensive discussion on how future congresses were to be organized. The Tenth Congress had demonstrated the usefulness of the congresses; the high-level segment, the workshops and the ancillary meetings should have more important roles to play in future congresses. Participants emphasized the contribution made by individual experts and non-governmental organizations at the workshops and ancillary meetings held during the Tenth Congress, noting that Governments should participate more actively in those meetings at future congresses, which should

achieve a balance in participation between States, regions and types of legal system.

...

"20. The representative of Mexico reiterated the offer made by his Government at the Tenth Congress to host the next congress. The Commission would examine, at its tenth session, the title, format and themes of future congresses. The observer for Guatemala, speaking on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, supported the offer made by the Government of Mexico."

10. During the Tenth Congress, the Government of Thailand also offered to act as host to the eleventh congress.

V. Organization of the Tenth Congress

11. The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice served as the preparatory body of the Tenth Congress. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 52/91 of 12 December 1997, four workshops on the following issues were held within the framework of the Congress: combating corruption; crimes related to the computer network; community involvement in crime prevention; and women in the criminal justice system.

12. In its resolution 53/110 of 9 December 1998, the General Assembly welcomed the offer of the institutes constituting the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme network to assist in preparation of the workshops. Four regional preparatory meetings for the Tenth Congress were held, in Bangkok from 2 to 4 November, in Beirut from 11 to 13 November and in Kampala from 7 to 9 December 1998, and in San José from 22 to 24 February 1999.

13. One of the innovative features of the Tenth Congress was the convening of a high-level segment on 14 and 15 April 2000 to allow heads of State or Government or government ministers to focus on the main theme of the Congress. Seventy-six high-level representatives addressed the high-level segment. The organization of work of the Congress included one session of pre-congress consultations, the establishment of Committees I and II, which shared agenda items with the plenary meetings and the high-level segment. The Congress also established, in Committee I, an open-ended working group to finalize the preliminary draft of the Vienna Declaration. Another innovation of the Tenth Congress was the convening of 35 ancillary meetings, attended, for the most part, by non-governmental organizations, individual experts and intergovernmental organizations. Over 1,397 participants attended the ancillary meetings.

VI. Action by the Commission

14. The Commission has before it the draft Plans of Action for the Implementation during the period 2001-2005 of the Vienna Declaration (E/CN.15/2001/5) for its consideration and adoption.

15. The Commission should review the role, function, periodicity and duration of the United Nations congresses, including the issue of regional preparatory meetings.

16. The Commission should review the rules of procedure of the United Nations congresses and make such recommendations to the Economic and Social Council as it may deem necessary.

Notes

[1] See *Tenth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, Vienna, 10-17 April 2000: report prepared by the Secretariat* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.00.IV.8).

[2] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2000, Supplement No. 10* (E/2000/30).